

PLANNING BOARD MEETING

Minutes, January 28, 2003

Members present: Joseph Barrell, Deborah Emello, Karl Haglund, James Heigham, Andrew McClurg

Also present: Tim Higgins, Senior Planner
Jeffrey Wheeler, Planning Coordinator
Ken Buckland, Planning Consultant

7:00 p.m. All being present, the Chairman called the meeting to order.

- The minutes of December 18, 2002, were unanimously approved with the following amendment – the Planning Board reconvened after the Executive Session in order to adjourn.

7:10 p.m. Trapelo Road/Belmont Street Corridor Study

Ken Buckland from the Cecil Group made a power point presentation on the current economic profile for the Town of Belmont. The show will be placed on the Corridor web page for public viewing. He then discussed the next steps for the Corridor Study.

Questions from the Board:

- Andrew McClurg inquired about the inverse relationship between housing values and commercial values and what this says about mixed-use development. He asked for more information on what type of residential unit is compatible with commercial and vice versa. Karl Haglund asked for examples of mixed-use development within Route 128. Ken Buckland mentioned that Winchester has adopted such zoning, but there are no results yet. He stated that he would look into it further.
- Joe Barrell was surprised by the small value of commercial area (3.7% of the entire Town). It will be tough to build on this in any meaningful way. These figures, however, do not include the future development of McLean or the Uplands. Ken Buckland suggested that the Board not think of just the tax base, but to think of the quality of life. Many communities are similar to Belmont with respect to this discrepancy – the value is in the life style of the community. At the suggestion of a different commercial tax rate, Ken Buckland advised not establishing this as it places the community at a competitive disadvantage – similar communities have tried this, but with no success.
- Karl Haglund further stated that it is discouraging to think that if two-story development is allowed in commercial areas that this would have such a small increased in assessments. Ken Buckland pointed out that the issue is whether the Town will be able to maintain and enhance the success of the existing commercial areas.

- Karl Haglund expressed concern about the impact of commercial development on abutting residential uses and about the services that mixed-use would need. Ken Buckland stated that mixed-use creates other quality of life issues – smaller units, affordable housing. The Town does not need to fear these units because traditionally these units do not create significant demand and take advantage of public transportation (re: trackless trolley line on the corridor).
- Ken Buckland asked the Board what they were looking for – What do you want for this study? Andrew McClurg stated that he could not draw conclusions without additional information. He asked for examples of how other communities have dealt with this problem. He would like images of what could occur. Ken stated that he would pull together examples of what other communities have done.
- Tim Higgins suggested looking at the Business Districts to examine buildings and looking what is nonconforming.
- Joe Barrell stated that the Board needs feedback from the entire community. Jeffrey Wheeler announced the Board's next meeting on February 13, 2003, is a work session that will begin to deal with this issue. Public participation and commentary are critical. Andrea Masciari, a member of the audience, mentioned a study that the Citizens Forum is doing on the Corridor as well.
- James Heigham talked about creating an idea: goal and objectives to create a vision for the corridor. Ken Buckland stated that the Board is currently looking at the land use/private sector impacts, however it also needs to look at the public right of way (pavement widths, streetscape, pedestrian improvements, etc.). Tim Higgins mentioned the future reconstruction of Trapelo Road.
- Joseph Barrell inquired about the funding that the Town of Arlington receives. Jeffrey Wheeler explained that Arlington is an "entitlement community" and therefore receives yearly federal funding for planning and capital improvements.
- Tim Higgins reminded the Board about the February 13th (work session) and 25th (regular meeting) meetings.

8:10 p.m. Public Hearing to rezone the former Volkswagen site from GR to LBIII

At the request of the property owner's agent, Roberta Sydney, James Heigham moved to continue the Public Hearing to February 25, 2003 at 7:10 p.m. at the Belmont Town Hall, Conference Room # 2. The motion was passed unanimously (5-0).

8:20 p.m. On a motion by James Heigham, seconded by Joe Barrell, the Planning Board unanimously voted (5-0) to enter into Executive Session to discuss pending litigation. The Board did not return to regular session.